

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
WHITE HOUSE SUPPORT STAFF

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DIRECTOR: WHITE HOUSE SITUATION ROOM

SUBJECT: ETHIOPIA

The military deposed Emperor Haile Selassie early this morning. Preliminary reports indicate that the monarch's ailing son, Crown Prince Asfa Wossen, has been chosen to succeed him to the throne. The ruling Armed Forces Coordinating Committee has dissolved parliament and suspended the constitution. Military courts also are being formed.

Troops and tanks were in evidence in Addis Ababa early today, but the city otherwise was calm. A daily curfew has been instituted for the hours of darkness; demonstrations and strikes are banned. There have been no reports of disturbances in the provinces.

The international airport at Addis Ababa is reportedly closed, and all flights are suspended.

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The Crown Prince, who is in his 50s, has been making a slow recovery from a serious stroke that left him barely able to talk. He is in Europe and may be unwilling to return in view of the military committee's harsh public statements concerning the whole royal family. The two female members of the royal family arrested by the military yesterday had opposed Asfa Wossen's succession.

The forced abdication of Haile Selassie appears to have been carefully prepared, and the ruling military committee may be able to accomplish it in the generally bloodless manner that has thus far characterized the Ethiopian revolution. As the revolution has progressed, the Emperor has been gradually stripped of power, isolated, and subjected to increasingly abusive propaganda attacks. Most of the aristocracy, including some members of the royal family, is under military detention, and the military appear able to cope with the one remaining provincial nobleman who has a small private army.

The military committee had planned to announce the forced abdication yesterday, which was the Ethiopian New Year's Day. The one-day delay suggests that the various factions on the ruling committee had difficulty in determining what course to follow. The apparent decision to retain the monarchical institution in an extremely attenuated form suggests that those on the committee favoring establishment of a genuinely constitutional regime and reconciliation of most elements in Ethiopian society probably still have the upper hand.

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Lieutenant General Aman, Defense Minister and Armed Forces Chief of Staff, probably has bolstered the moderates on the shadowy military committee.

The prospects for accomplishing today's change without violence depend in large part on what the military committee does with Haile Selassie. Radicals on the committee have been pressing for his trial and possible execution, while the moderates appear to favor allowing him to live out his life in one of his palaces in the countryside. Haile Selassie had not resisted the steady erosion of his once absolute powers, but was reported to be resisting yielding his overseas assets to the committee.